Author’s response to reviews

Title: Air Pollution and Health in Sri Lanka: A Review of Epidemiologic Studies

Authors:

Yatagama Lokuge S Nandasena (sumalnandasena@gmail.com)
Ananda R Wickremasinghe (arwicks@sltnet.lk)
Nalini Sathiakumar (NSathiakumar@ms.soph.uab.edu)

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Author’s response to reviews: see over
Miss Nafisa Qazi

The BioMed Central Editorial Team

Air Pollution and Health in Sri Lanka: A Review of Epidemiologic Studies

Thank you for sending the comments of reviewers. We have modified the manuscript based on the reviewer’s comments. Please also find attached the responses to the reviewer’s comments.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Sumal Nandasena,
National Institute of Health Sciences,
Ministry of Health,
Sri Lanka.
Responses to Reviewer's Comments:
Reviewer: Claudio Pelucchi

Comment
The manuscript is of limited interest because it reviews an issue (the relation between air pollution and health in Sri Lanka) for which a few data of sufficient quality are available.

Response:
We accept that the manuscript reviews air pollution studies in Sri Lanka only. This also highlights the scarcity of studies in the country and in the region on this important topic. This manuscript gives information on some studies that are not accessible via the electronic data bases which will be a very important source of information of the current state of research of health effects of air pollution in Sri Lanka.

Comment:
The manuscript is clear and well-written, but there are some errors throughout the text, particularly with references. The ones that I could find are listed below. I suggest that the authors revise the text carefully.

Response:
We have reviewed the text and necessary corrections are made.

Following minor essential revisions were attended:

1. Please add two references at page 5, lines 4 (after “(USEPA) standards”) and 10 (after “<20 µg/m3”).

Response:
The reference for the WHO guidelines was added. The reference to the USEPA standards of the 1994 gazette was deleted.

Comment:
2. Page 5, lines 12-14. From “the three-year average...” to “and in a residential area was 58.82...”. This sentence seems to contrast with the one (a few lines before) stating that there is only one air quality monitoring station in Sri Lanka. Please explain.

Response:
This has been explained further. Although the measurement was done at the same station, the measurements were done on a weekly basis using different instruments. The following sentence was added

“Special 24-hour measurements for the purpose of the inter-country comparison were carried out at the Colombo Fort monitoring station on a weekly basis using the Gent stacked filter unit particle samplers.”
Comment:
3. Page 8. Search strategy. Please add more details on the search string used. How were the search terms combined? Or were they just entered separately in Medline?

Response:
This has been explained.

Comment:
4. Page 9. Reference to “Figure 1” is wrong. It should be “Figure 4”.

Response:
This was corrected.

Comment:
5. Page 12. The reference to paper from Elangasinghe (ref. #40) is missing.

Response:
The reference was added.

Comment:
6. References 22 and 41 seem to refer to the same research. If this is the case, one can be deleted.

Response:
One reference was deleted.

Comment:
7. All reference numbers in Tables 2 and 3 are wrong. Please check.

Response:
This was corrected.
Responses to Reviewer's Comments:
Reviewer: Jonathan A Bernstein

Comment:
The primary weakness of this study is the background section of the article. The outdoor air pollution section describes only three measures of outdoor air pollution but this information does not provide any insight into the interpretation of the literature search. In addition, the indoor air pollution background describes some surveys of cooking fuel and tobacco smoke exposures in these homes. However, the same rigor demonstrated with the health effects portion of the paper is lacking in the background portion of the paper. It may be better to separate the article into two separate submissions to expand on the first part of the article and increase its rigor.

Response:
The apparent perception of the lack of rigor is the reflection of a lack of data for its scientific interpretation. We maintain the contention that both aspects should be addressed in the same manuscript.

Comment:
One minor clarification, On page 9 the paper refers to Figure 1 when explaining why one of the studies was excluded from the review, but it is unclear how Figure 1 explains this omission.

Response:
This was corrected.